COMS 610 - WINTER, 1995.

SEMINAR IN MEDIA POLICY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND INSTITUTIONS

Dr. Lorna Roth
Work Phone No.: 848-2562
Bryan Office No. 412/1
Office Hours: Th. 4:30 - 5:30; 9:00 - 10:00 p.m. (after class)
or by appointment.

Though many assume that the study of policy is rather dry and stark, my assumptions about policy are quite the reverse. In my opinion, there is nothing more important for communications scholars to understand than policy, because it is policy that eventually frames our cultural and communications practices. By this, I mean that policies discursively represent the parameters and underlying structures which enable and set limits to what we can and cannot do in regard to communications in Canadian society. Public policies define the words and the interpretive frameworks which organize communications and cultural development in a given society. Yet they are often post-hoc phenomena. In other words, policies tend to be written after the emergence of a new practice or technology, which has already challenged the viability of an outdated one. This complexity makes them particularly interesting as objects of study.

Policy decisions and practices are the result of many considerations - historical, economic, technological, social, political, psychological, administrative and bureaucratic, among others. Cultural and media policies are also the outcome of an interactive process involving at least four distinct "communities" or groups of participants: the cultural community, the political community, the economic community, and the general public. The interests of these four groups seldom coincide and therefore trade-offs and the determination of priorities become necessary in the allocation of scarce resources. Patterns of these interactions and the negotiations of these trade-offs are integral to the content of this seminar, which will focus on the historical development and interpretations of Canadian media policies and will provide the students with tools for better understanding the public policy contruction and deconstruction processes.

Cultural, film policies and practices, and information highway issues will be critically examined from several dimensions in this course, but the main focus of this seminar will be on Canadian broadcasting policies, institutions, and ethics.

Course Topics and Readings

The course topics will be somewhat flexible in order to assure that the needs and interests of the students will be met. Students will be expected to develop a familiarity with and understanding of issues and literature dealing with the history of Canadian public policy, cultural and media regulation, cultural nationalism, new media technologies, Canadian content, advertising and controversial content, cable and satellite delivery, the role of the state in constructing public and private media services, and alternative/emerging forms of communications media practices. The emphasis will be on policy and institutions, although responsibility factors will be implicit. Seminar participants are encouraged to track developments and implications throughout the semester. During the course, there will be several guest lecturers.

Although the following topics are numbered, they may in fact not be dealt with in this exact sequence in order to leave room for emerging class interests (pun intended!).

Course Topics

Topic One.
Cultural and Media Policies as Objects of Study.

Topic Two.
Theoretical Approaches to Media and Cultural Policies.

Topic Three.
Canadian Broadcasting/Media Policy - History of State Intervention in Canada. Key Institutions.

Topic Four.
Broadcasting Regulation and the Public Forum: The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, Lobby Interest Groups and the

Policy-Making Process. Exemplar Cases: Minority Broadcasting (Aboriginal, Ethnic, and Community Broadcasting); Information Highway hearings in March.

Topic Five.
The Broadcasting Act as a Policy Exemplar: A Critical Analysis - Reading the Text.

Topic Six.
The Challenge of New Technologies and Conditions to Policy Frameworks - Cable expansion; Information Highway infrastructural development.

Topic Seven.
Copyright Issues.

Topic Eight.
Reflections on Film Production and Distribution Policies in Canada.

Topic Nine.
Media Responsibility, Ethical Codes and (In)voluntary Guidelines.

There will be no books assigned for this course. The corpus will consists of articles, Press releases, government documents, etc. Two copies of each of these will be located in the Learning Centre for your convenience. Copies of the 1991 Broadcasting Act have been ordered and are available at the Loyola Campus bookstores.

N.B. Please begin to collect newspaper and magazine clippings to contribute to a general discussion about policy developments for the first few minutes of each class.

Assignments

Two papers and very active class participation (written and oral) will be required for this seminar.

Assignment No. 1. On a rotational basis, students will be expected to

prepare a three-page written critical analysis of either an assigned reading or a reading of your choice which must be made available to us at the beginning of the term along with the other readings. Copies of the critical analysis must be distributed to the members of the class on the day of presentation. You will each be responsible for animating the discussion pertinent to this reading. If the reading is long, you may choose to do this assignment/presentation in small groups. This, as well as participation in seminar discussions, will count for 20 percent of the final mark for this course. Due Date: Flexible, but will begin in the second week of class.

Assignment No. 2. This research paper will explore a policy issue from a theoretical perspective and may be negotiated with me on a case-by-case basis, so that you can individually tailor the topic to meet your specific interests. This paper will count for 35 percent of your final mark. Due Date: Early - Feb 16; Late date - March 2. **There will be no extensions, given that I have already given you one.**

Assignment No. 3. This assignment is fairly complex and given the size of this seminar will have to be done in groups rather than individually. This means that you will get a group mark for most of the assignment. In order to be fair, however, I am asking that you each hand in your specific research portion or chapter which was YOUR contribution to the group's presentation.

This assignment is a policy intervention simulation exercise. You are to divide into cultural/arts/media, cable, telecommunications, information highway, etc. lobby groups of your choice. These may be actual lobby groups or fictional ones. The group assignment is to prepare, present, and defend a Policy Brief which will represent a condensed version of either your own group's position on a media policy issue or that of a lobby group (real or fictional). Your position should be clearly argued from a variety of perspectives and should be compared and contrasted with the existing situation and other possible alternatives. The advantages of your position should be weighed against its disadvantages. outlining your very specific positions on a critical issue (again, this might be real, representative, or fictional). Your entire brief should be no longer than 10 - 12 tightly-argued pages (double-spaced). It is to be distributed to us ahead of time (at least one week in advance) for our examination (leave 2 copies in policy box in Learning Centre) and presented orally to

the seminar members who will pretend to be members of either the Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Communications, the CRTC, an Arts Council, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, etc. - take your pick.) Other specific details about these interventions can be discussed in class. Please note, however, that tight reasoning and argument, and the evidence of extensive knowledge of sources and resources will be valued more highly than length. After you present the brief, the seminar participants (bogus CRTC Commissioners/members of Arts Councils, etc.) will have an opportunity to critically question you about your specific arguments. The Policy Brief project will be worth 45 percent (30% group mark; 15% individual contribution) of your final mark and should conform to the following format:

a. Title page with title of submission, name of intervenor - individual or agency (if applicable), and date.
b. Table of Contents page with section headings and sub-headings, indicative of the substance.
c. Within sections, all paragraphs should be numbered to the left of the top line. All pages should be numbered at the top centre or right.
d. At the back, there should be a section called Notes or References, with suitably numbered sources of ideas and quotations used in your Policy Brief. You need not footnote on the bottom of the page itself.
e. Bibliography should follow notes and should indicate the relevant pages of books, documents and other papers consulted. Persons you have interviewed should also be listed here.

N.B. Please make a photocopy of your assignments before you hand them in, just in case. All papers must be typed and submitted on time. Please use a dark computer ribbon - my eyes get really strained with pale inked ribbons.

There is a writing assistance program available for Concordia University students, who might be experiencing writer's block, panic, or any other symptom of "normal" student life. It is not a remedial program. It is a program designed for anyone who just needs some advice on how to improve a paper or how to get started . . . for the last time, etc. The number for this service at Loyola is 848-3555. For the same service on the Sir George Williams campus, call 848-3545.

Criteria of Evaluation

Assignment No. 1: 20% Due Date - flexible and self-selected.
Assignment No. 2: 35% Due Date - Early submission date: February 16; late submission date: March 2.
Assignment No. 3: 45% Due Date - one of last 4 classes. (30% group mark; 15% individual mark).

Reading assignments and class schedules will be handed out in the second class.

Readings for the second class are:

1. Richard Simeon. Studying Public Policy.
2. Nicholas Garnham. Media and the Public Sphere._____
3. Thomas Streeter. Selling the Air: Property and the Politics of US Commercial Broadcasting._____

You are to read all three articles. The latter two will be presented by _____ and _____.

Personal Questionnaire

Name
Address

Phone Numbers Fax Number (if available)

Level of study at Concordia (Please underline):

Independent MA

Personal and Academic Background

1. Why did you take this course? List your objectives.

2. List any previous courses taken or work experience that might pertain to cultural or communications policy studies or developments. How do you think it will relate to this course?

3. List topics of interest to you that you would very much like to discuss in class.

4. Have you ever attended a CRTC or Parliamentary subcommittee hearing? Give details.

Yes No

5. Have you ever been a witness at either the CRTC, a Royal Commission or at a government subcommittee hearing?

Yes No

Give details.

6. In your opinion, what are the three key media/ telecommunications policy issues in Canada and how do you see them as becoming resolved?

7. List several questions that you have about cultural and communications policy matters in Canada and elsewhere.

8. Define "policy."